

NEWS: BUSINESS

Broomfield nonprofit agrees to pay \$449,999 to 10 workers who were fired after forming a union

The food nonprofit Big Green, founded by Kimbal Musk, agreed not to appeal and must require all managers to go through employee-rights training



Tamara Chuang

4:10 AM MDT on Sep 25, 2024

Share

Original
Reporting

The Trust Project



Liza Nielsen wears a pro-union button and t-shirt while working at this Starbucks store at 2800 Rock Creek Cir. in Superior, which is one of hundreds of locations to successfully unionize nationwide. (Kathryn Scott, Special to The Colorado Sun)

Ten workers who lost their jobs three years ago after forming a union have settled with their old nonprofit employer for \$449,999 in back pay, benefits and wages, according to an unfair-termination settlement announced Tuesday by the National Labor Relations Board.

Big Green, the Broomfield nonprofit founded by Kimbal Musk (brother of Elon), agreed to end its appeal of the charges that stemmed from the Sept. 13, 2021, layoff of the entire 10-person bargaining unit. The organization, which at the time was restructuring its business, must also require current managers and supervisors to attend NLRB training sessions on employee

rights, according to the settlement.

According to the case, the Big Green workers, represented by the Denver Newspaper Guild-Communications Workers of America, Local 37074, AFL-CIO, said the organization “threatened employees with discipline and termination for engaging in union activities,” in July 2021.

☀️ READ MORE

1914 Ludlow Massacre took lives of 25 miners and family members during bitter strike for fair wages

2:03 PM MDT on Apr 20, 2026

Colorado Democrats, labor movement revive push to ease unionization rules. Jared Polis is promising another veto.

10:19 AM MST on Jan 9, 2026

14 things that will make headlines in Colorado in 2026

4:15 AM MST on Jan 4, 2026

By Sept. 13 that year, Big Green changed its business model from maintaining community gardens and teaching students about gardening and healthy food choices to dispersing grants, and laid off the 10 workers who operated the community gardens.

The union filed charges and earlier this year, a U.S. district judge issued an injunction requiring Big Green to end unfair labor practices and reinstate workers after finding the company retaliated less than three months after workers requested union recognition. At the time, a spokesperson for the company said that it had offered to reinstate all 10 former employees. Two returned, according to a motion filed last month.

The Colorado Sun reached out to the union and Big Green for comment but did not hear back.

The settlement, according to legal filings, splits the \$449,999.98 between all 10 workers. Total sums ranged from roughly \$18,500 to \$119,000. The payments include back pay, interim expenses, interest, excess taxes and something called frontpay, or compensation for earnings they would have made had they not been wrongfully terminated.

EDITOR'S PICKS



First came the robots. Then came the cameras. That's when this Colorado mountain town had enough.



As retiree pensions shrank, Colorado PERA paid its staff millions of dollars in bonuses



Are less-thirsty crops a solution to Colorado's growing water problems?

Meanwhile, Big Green must not only send and email copies of the settlement to all current and former employees, but also read it out loud to staff in a meeting “scheduled to ensure the widest possible attendance on each shift,” according to the filing.

In a statement, NLRB Region 27 regional director Matthew S. Lomax in Denver said, “Workers have a right to take collective action free from employer retaliation. The work by Region 27 staff to obtain this settlement exemplifies their diligence and dedication to employees’ rights.” Big Green’s worker union was among more than 100 new unions formed in Colorado since the start of the COVID pandemic. But few of those new unions reached a new contract, according to an earlier Sun investigation.

Type of Story: News

Based on facts, either observed and verified directly by the reporter, or reported and verified from knowledgeable sources.

Tagged: Kimbal Musk, labor unions, union



Tamara Chuang Business & Technology Reporter

✉ tamara@coloradosun.com

Tamara Chuang writes about Colorado business and the local economy for The Colorado Sun, which she cofounded in 2018 with a mission to make sure quality local journalism is a sustainable business. Her focus on the economy during the pandemic... [More by Tamara Chuang](#)



The Colorado Sun is an award-winning news outlet based in Denver that strives to cover all of Colorado so that our state — our community — can better understand itself. The Colorado Sun is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. EIN: 36-5082144

♥ [Donate](#)



(720) 263-2338

Got a story tip? Drop us a note at tips@coloradosun.com

Follow The Sun

[How to Support The Sun](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Sponsorship](#)
[Newsletters](#)
[Events](#)
[Podcast](#)

Topics

[Business](#)
[Crime and Courts](#)
[Education](#)
[Energy](#)
[Environment](#)
[Health](#)
[Housing](#)
[Outdoors](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Politics](#)
[SunLit](#)
[View All](#)

Info

[About Us](#)
[Editorial Standards and Policies](#)
[Ethics Policy](#)
[Corrections](#)
[DEI Commitment](#)
[How We're Funded](#)
[Jobs](#)
[Support FAQs](#)
[Store](#)
[RSS](#)